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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 15 February 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: U Aye (Myanmar)

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The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 725th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of India, Germany, Ukraine and Belgium. Before giving the floor to those inscribed to speak today, I should like, on behalf of the Conference, and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to the Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control of Germany, His Excellency Ambassador Rudiger Hartmann, who will be addressing the Conference for the first time. I should like to thank Ambassador Hartmann for the interest he attaches to our work and wish him a fruitful stay in Geneva. I am sure that the Conference will listen to his statement with keen interest. I now give the floor to the first speaker on my list, the representative of India, Ambassador Ghose.

Mrs. GHOSE (India): Last month, on 25 January, India had joined other G-21 members of the CD in calling for the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as directed by our heads of State and government at the Non-Aligned summit in Cartagena last year. I had expressed the sincere hope that you, Mr. President, would undertake serious and intensive consultations on this issue over the next few weeks so that a satisfactory agreement could be reached at an early date. We were seeking accommodation and cooperation and not confrontation. Our intention was to engage other delegations in looking for ways in which to start early this year negotiations on a time-bound programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons. We understand that no agreement on this important issue has been achieved. This is not only a matter of deep regret but of dismay. You might recall that I had said that agreement on this issue made 1996 a year critical to the CD and to the future of all disarmament negotiations and that it was in this context that we, India, envisioned the future negotiations on a CTBT.

While thanking you for your sincere efforts to achieve a consensus, we cannot but regret that despite your best efforts, we seem to have failed to agree on a mechanism to discuss nuclear disarmament in the CD, due to a lack of flexibility on the part of a few delegations who are obviously creating obstacles on the road to the fulfilment of those objectives to which they say they are committed. As I had said earlier, this unwillingness cannot but affect our positions on the CTBT negotiations, a development we had felt was avoidable.

In addition, some recent statements on the CTBT have tended to deliberately obfuscate some fundamental and well-known concepts and questions have been raised about the seriousness of delegations including perhaps my own in trying to relocate the CTBT in its originally envisaged context. Let me give some examples which I feel require both clarification and correction. Firstly, there appears to be a pronounced tendency to believe that life in the CD began with the indefinite extension of the NPT in May 1995. Consequently it is projected that all mandates and commitments must flow from the NPT Conference. It would serve us well to keep in mind that the Conference draws its mandate from the consensus forged in SSOD-I and the "Decalogue" that followed. It was at SSOD-I, and not at the NPT Review and Extension Conference, that the need for a single multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament was agreed upon and put into effect. It was also there that the highest priority in disarmament was accorded to nuclear issues and the

(Mrs. Ghose, India)

ultimate goal of the elimination of all nuclear weapons was recognized as essential. It is misleading to suggest that the commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons is solely a part of an NPT bargain. The Conference on Disarmament did not begin negotiations on the CTBT after the NPT Review and Extension Conference. The negotiations started in January 1994, a year and half before the NPT Conference, following consensus resolution 48/70 at the United Nations General Assembly in 1993 which enjoyed the support of the entire international community, something which, I may add, the NPT does not. There is a danger in placing the CTBT negotiations and indeed the entire agenda of the Conference in the context of the NPT. I would not, at this stage, like to dwell further on the possible implications of such an approach.

Secondly, questions have been raised about the concept of a "time-bound framework" for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It has been, unbelievably, characterized as a strategy of failure, a threat to disarmament, as something which overturns arms control efforts. The logic behind such characterization, if any, appears to me to be perverse. As far back as SSOD-I, there was a reference to time-frames for negotiations. The very agreements of arms control which have been reiterated in this chamber and cited as examples of nuclear disarmament - the INF Treaty and the START I and START II treaties - have inherent time-frames. They are expected to attain certain targets within given-time periods. Similarly, we believe, logically, that the eventual elimination of all nuclear weapons also needs to be carried out within a finite period if it is to be indeed a sincere commitment and not just rhetoric.

Just to say that this is not India's position alone, I have just this morning come across a communication in which I was informed that an organization, albeit a non-governmental organization, called "International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War", which has 84 national medical associations, representing over 200,000 members, had in February 1995 issued a written call for the abolition of nuclear weapons to be signed by physicians and supporters worldwide. The call demands that Governments, especially those of nuclear-weapon States, enter immediately into negotiations to eradicate nuclear weapons under a firm timetable. The call was disseminated throughout the federation and sparked a tremendous response, and I am quoting from this, from Australia to Zambia. The call was endorsed by thousands of physicians, medical students and other supporters. This particular thing is only to illustrate that it is not just India who is calling for negotiations on the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-frame.

The CTBT, if it is indeed an integral step, as this is affirmed and reaffirmed - if it is indeed an integral step in the disarmament process and if it is truly to be comprehensive - will in fact freeze the nuclear status of all countries. I might add here, in response to a question about obligations to be undertaken by non-NPT States, that the legal obligations of the CTBT would, we expect, be binding on all States parties, including those who are not members of other agreements. This freeze, if it were to be an indefinite one, would extend the net of discrimination fashioned by the NPT in which some countries would have the ability to threaten the very existence of others with nuclear weapons for eternity. It is obvious that the only security that the other countries would have would be provided by a commitment that this freeze

(Mrs. Ghose, India)

is not forever, that this freeze is for a short and finite time period and will lead inevitably to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. An open-ended commitment to eliminate nuclear weapons is an unsigned promissory note, useless against the threat of weapons which is a matter of national security for us and I expect also for others.

This leads me to the third misrepresentation which needs to be clarified today. It has been argued that the CD is not the appropriate forum for negotiations on nuclear disarmament since the process would involve bilateral trade-offs, specialized verification, et al. I do not recall ever having said at any stage that we would wish to be part of such bilateral or plurilateral trade-offs between the nuclear-weapons States. We cannot be part of the actual trade-offs since we have nothing to trade. What is it then that we wish to discuss in an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the CD? Our reasoning is as follows. We are not only involved but concerned because these weapons threaten all countries. Surely the members of the CD have the responsibility and the right to ensure that the pace of the nuclear disarmament process, once started, is maintained, and speeded up if possible and its extent deepened and widened! Steps would also have to be taken to ensure that, pending elimination of all nuclear weapons, an appropriate environment ensuring the security of all States is created. We see discussions in the ad hoc committee resulting in a series of treaties with time-frames for their negotiation. One such step could be - and this would not be a surprise to anybody in this hall - a convention prohibiting the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. Such a convention would codify the legal norm against the use of nuclear weapons which already exists in the principles of international armed conflict. Clearly this does not involve the CD in bilateral trade-offs or a numbers game. Ultimately, however, a treaty for the banning and elimination of nuclear weapons has to be negotiated. These are tasks not for an esoteric club of vested interests but for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament.

As a relative newcomer to the CD, I feel every time I walk into this hall that it is a hall with trick mirrors in which nothing is what it seems to be. Those who want a truly comprehensive treaty are labelled spoilers. Those who want to eliminate nuclear weapons are being seen as a threat to disarmament. A time-bound framework to eliminate nuclear weapons is seen as a diabolical plot to stall negotiations on the CTBT. Those who want no nuclear-weapon States are being accused of wanting to increase their number. The threatened are being painted as a threat. It is time that these trick mirrors were removed and unnecessary diversions avoided so that we may have a clearer picture of the realities of the situation. If we are all truly agreed that we are today, in the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, negotiating a real step towards nuclear disarmament, we have to work together to reflect this in our negotiations and in our statements in a true spirit of understanding and sensitivity to each other's national interests.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of India for her statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, the Federal Government Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control, Ambassador Hartmann.

Mr. HARTMANN (Germany): Mr. President, let me thank you very warmly for the kind words that you have found to welcome me here and, since this is the first time I have the privilege to address the Conference on Disarmament as my country's newly appointed Commissioner for Disarmament, I take the opportunity to warmly congratulate you on your assumption of this year's first CD presidency. We are aware that this initial phase is highly sensitive and that you bear a special responsibility which you have discharged in a very skilful and competent manner. I should also like to express my appreciation for the professional and efficient assistance provided to the CD by Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and the United Nations Secretary-General's Personal Representative, and by his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

Given the CD's unique role as the only multilateral body to negotiate universally applicable arms control and disarmament treaties, the German Government attaches great importance to its work. We are, however, concerned that the CD's membership is somewhat limited. In our view, this is at odds with the role which the CD has to play in universal arms control and disarmament. Our fear is that this role could be jeopardized if the issue of the expansion of CD membership is not speedily resolved. In our view, requests for membership by all candidates should be respected, which means that all States wishing to participate in the CD as full members should have the right to do so. We are, of course, fully aware that the United Nations Disarmament Commission and the United Nations General Assembly's First Committee will remain the only bodies in which all United Nations Member States are represented in the field of disarmament.

The profound changes in Europe since 1990 have also revolutionized arms control. While one of its major functions, up to that time, had been to prevent a dangerous East-West confrontation, arms control is now facing new challenges. In this sense, in December 1993, German Foreign Minister Kinkel had already, in a 10-point initiative, outlined some of the tasks ahead. I am very pleased that one of the goals mentioned therein, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, was achieved at the New York NPT Review and Extension Conference last May. The documents agreed upon at this conference, relating to the strengthening of the review process and to the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, should guide and encourage the CD's work in the nuclear field.

In this context, the commitment by all participating States to reach agreement on a CTBT in 1996 is of primary importance for us, and we share the view that the CTBT negotiations should be the CD's priority task this year. The German Government has long been an advocate of a comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty which is universal, unlimited in duration and effectively verifiable. This treaty would in our view help both to prevent nuclear proliferation and speed the nuclear disarmament process. In 1996 there is a window of opportunity to achieve the long-sought goal of a CTBT. The negotiations should be concluded in time to allow for endorsement of the treaty text during this year's United Nations General Assembly session. We would indeed prefer conclusion of the work on the treaty text by June this year.

(Mr. Hartmann, Germany)

On behalf of the German Federal Government, I should like to urge you to stick to the goal set by the international community for the conclusion of the CTBT in 1996. Artificial links to other items will not help but rather hinder its conclusion on schedule. It is clear to us that intensive negotiations still lie ahead. I should like to express my congratulations and best wishes for success to Ambassador Ramaker, who has been charged with chairing the negotiations at this crucial stage.

Let me now address some of the major CTBT issues still to be resolved.

Scope: We appreciate and strongly welcome the "zero threshold" approach which is supported by France, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and endorsed by Russia. We once again call on the People's Republic of China to subscribe to this position.

Imminent Nuclear Test Explosion: In Germany's view, the Executive Council of the CTBT organization should be able to act if there is suspicion of an imminent nuclear explosion. We have introduced new treaty language and are confident that it will find consensus. We reserve our right to reintroduce the original language, should the new language not be acceptable.

International monitoring system: While otherwise satisfied with the current acquis, we consider noble gas measuring to be an indispensable IMS technology because of its unequivocal evidence value.

On-site inspections: We attach great importance to capturing time-critical events in the initial phase of an on-site inspection. Therefore a regulation should be sought which ensures that on-site inspections can be carried out immediately after a possible event.

Organization: Germany is in favour of a structure modelled on the chemical weapons Convention. We support a small but independent CTBT organization in Vienna which could cooperate with IAEA.

Entry into force: We favour a numerical solution providing for a ratifications threshold under 60 in order to secure a rapid entry into force.

Financial and personnel questions: In line with its long-standing commitment to the CTBT, Germany will do its best to contribute to the funding of the Preparatory Commission's budget in 1997. In the same constructive spirit, Germany is prepared to provide high-level personnel for the future staff of the Preparatory Commission.

Another topic to which the German Government attaches great importance is the early start of "cut-off" negotiations. This, too, is a subject of importance in the context of both nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. I hope that the CD will establish an ad hoc committee on "cut-off" on the basis of the agreed mandate contained in the report by Ambassador Shannon of Canada. Early conclusion of the CTBT negotiations would allow for a rapid start of cut-off negotiations, and thus to address a further goal mentioned in the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference's "Principles and objectives for

(Mr. Hartmann, Germany)

nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament". As you are aware, the United Nations General Assembly consensus resolution 48/75 L stressed the importance of a "cut-off" treaty.

As stated in this document, nuclear disarmament is a third topic in its own right in the programme of action for implementation of article VI of the NPT. This has been implemented to an extent unimaginable a few years ago. The process must, however, be continued and the CD should examine the options for doing so. I join the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hjelm-Wallén, in welcoming the fact that you, Mr. President, took the initiative to conduct intensive consultations with a view to developing a basis for consensus on this issue. Having listened to the previous speaker, I hope that the Chair will, nevertheless, continue with its efforts.

The Federal Republic of Germany has long advocated the strengthening of the biological and toxin weapons Convention by means of a verification protocol. Granted, much progress has been made in the Ad Hoc Group. Nevertheless, it is obvious that negotiations must be stepped-up if we want to achieve timely results. It is our hope that the fourth review conference in December will give new impetus to these negotiations.

The BTWC was the first disarmament agreement to ban an entire category of weapons of mass destruction while also mandating the elimination of existing stocks. Whereas this agreement was considered a major achievement in the 1970s, many have since then come to realize that the lack of a verification regime represents a serious flaw. In the absence of such a regime, suspicions could be - and indeed have been - raised against BTWC member States regarding their compliance with the Treaty. Moreover, development and stockpiling of biological weapons by one country has proved that biological weapons indeed pose a threat. All this has confirmed our conviction that a BTWC verification regime is vital in order to successfully deter potential violators and to establish lasting confidence in treaty compliance.

Notwithstanding the priority need for the CD to address nuclear items in its work programme for this year, in our view conventional arms control deserves greater attention on the part of the Conference. The large number of conventional armed conflicts in many parts of the world and the tremendous suffering caused by the use of conventional weapons are a matter of great concern. As we are all aware, the specific conventional arms control and confidence-building measures agreed upon within OSCE have helped to overcome East-West confrontation and to promote peaceful and cooperative relations between its members. The Treaty on conventional forces in Europe, for example, which has led to the elimination of more than 50,000 major weapon systems, is a shield against a new conventional arms race in Europe. It is also a firm basis for stability among the evolving family of old and new democracies in Europe. Moreover, we expect that the negotiations on conventional arms control presently under way between the conflict parties in the former Yugoslavia, with the active support of the members of the Contact Group, will conclude successfully within the time-frame set by the Dayton agreement, and that thereafter they will have a similar beneficial effect for the Balkan region as a whole. Against this background, I should like to urge

(Mr. Hartmann, Germany)

the CD to resume its own work on the subject of conventional arms control in the transparency in armaments Ad Hoc Committee, where constructive and fruitful discussions have already taken place in previous years.

In conclusion, let me make a brief reference to another topic. Every day in the former Yugoslavia as in so many other countries in the world, civilians - men, women and children - fall victim to land-mines. In May, the third round of the Review Conference of the States parties to the Convention on certain conventional weapons (CCW) will, we trust, considerably strengthen the provisions on land-mines of this Convention and thereby greatly diminish the terrible effects on the civilian population of the use of land-mines. We see the possibility that - once the Conference for the United Nations weaponry Convention is concluded - mine-related issues - for instance the project for a land-mine control programme - could be discussed in the transparency in armaments Ad Hoc Committee.

This overview on issues of relevance to the CD - although far from complete - demonstrates the importance of your agenda for international peace and stability. The issues are complex and the interests diverse, as is quite natural within a Conference which aims at universally applicable solutions. But, as the CD has shown in the case of the chemical weapons Convention, three and a half years ago, with polit. cal determination, endurance and readiness for compromise even the most difficult negotiations can be successfully concluded.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Germany for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine, Ambassador Slipchenko.

Mr. SLIPCHENKO (Ukraine): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on the excellent discharge of your important functions which ensured a smooth commencement of the 1996 session of the Conference on Disarmament. This has been extremely essential as the Conference is being confronted with a major challenge of completion of the comprehensive nuclear-test-ban treaty in accordance with the relevant resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, a treaty which we regard as a landmark non-proliferation and disarmament measure. Our delegation shares the view already expressed in the course of the first three plenary meetings of the CD that this objective is an achievable one provided the parties to the NTB negotiations manifest sufficient political will to resolve a few outstanding problems of a principal nature.

It is more than obvious that the issue of scope occupies a central place in the ongoing discussions, and we would like to reiterate our support for the treaty based on the true-zero-yield standard which would establish an effective ban on all nuclear explosions using the language proposed by Australia in its working paper CD/NTB/WP.222. The ban should be truly comprehensive making inter alia no exception for so-called peaceful nuclear explosions. The reference to PNEs should be excluded from the text of the draft, in our opinion.

(Mr. Slipchenko, Ukraine)

In the same line we continue to see evident merits in incorporating into the text of the treaty provisions envisaging the closure of the nuclear test sites, as well as the section on security assurances to the States parties.

On the verification regime of the CTBT, our delegation is of the view that current intensive negotiations should result in the creation of the international monitoring system (IMS) having precisely defined parameters and procedures which would allow it to perform efficient verification of the treaty, and thus enhance compliance with obligations undertaken by the States parties. We believe that provisions of the treaty on the IMS should be put within the wider context of measures aimed at confidence-building and ensuring transparency, which are to be duly reflected in the text.

As regards on-site inspections, we look with great attention and interest at the debate within Working Group 1 of the NTB Ad Hoc Committee. We think that along with reaching consensus on basic principles and purposes of OSI, the parties to the negotiations are yet to resolve a number of relevant specific questions, including the sequence of steps to be taken if inspection produces contradictory or incomplete data; more detailed elaboration of the procedure of lifting the allegation concerning non-compliance of the State party, in case results of inspection provide no reliable data to corroborate such an allegation; and what should be done, taking into account that the decision adopted by the NTB organization on non-compliance is supposed to be final, in case the State which has requested inspection is not satisfied with its results.

It seems also worth determining the exact sequence of measures to be taken by the organization in case a State party recognizes the fact of testing after inspection has started, particularly what measures are to be taken by the inspection team as to whether to continue or cease its activities. We also deem it necessary to include in the text the provision regulating the measures to be triggered by the inspected State party and organization in case it is proved that members of the inspection team violated rules of conduct.

During recent deliberations the issue of funding has been discussed from different perspectives. In this connection, we suggest that making a preliminary assessment of costs of conducting one "standard" inspection should be useful for our future work.

I would also like to draw attention of the distinguished delegates to the working document introduced by our delegation (CD/NTB/WP.306 of 13 February 1996) which addresses some concrete issues related to the international monitoring system and on-site inspection, complementing our previous proposals on the rolling text contained in CD/NTB/WP.234.

Notwithstanding the crucial importance of the NTB negotiations and their timely completion, we are of the opinion that other items on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament should not be forgotten as well. We hope that the CD would be able, eventually, to overcome the obstacles hampering an agreement on appropriate ways to consider other issues within its mandate, including the

(Mr. Slipchenko, Ukraine)

start of the work of the ad hoc committee on "cut-off", continuation of our previous discussions on security assurances, and addressing the wider topic of nuclear disarmament.

I appreciate very much the stand taken by the previous speaker, the distinguished Commissioner for Disarmament and Arms Control of Germany, Ambassador Hartmann, on the matter of the expansion of the CD membership, regarding it as an issue of primordial importance and urgency. You will certainly understand that I fully share this view. This issue has been our constant concern for a number of years. Unfortunately, in spite of the adoption of the CD decision (CD/1356), we can only repeat a nearly ritualistic phrase - that of our deep regret over the CD's inability to effectively enlarge its membership and implement the consensus resolution of the United Nations General Assembly calling for the implementation of the above-mentioned decision on an urgent basis and also urging that the new members should assume membership of the Conference at the start of its 1996 session.

We would like to stress that Ukraine does not regard our admission to the Conference as a sort of a special favour, but rather as an invitation to contribute to common productive work based on the experience of this country in the field of arms control and disarmament, including its input into nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, strict fulfilment of its obligations under major arms control treaties, as well as on the corresponding expertise and capacities acquired and developed by it. In our view, this bears special relevance now when the Conference is in the final phase of the CTBT endeavour, while negotiations on the "cut-off" convention and other important issues are likely to follow.

We share the view expressed by Ambassador Selebi of South Africa that the CD has to redo itself in order to maintain its status and prestige. Expansion of its membership, or rather aligning it with the cardinal changes in international politics, should play an essential role in such a reform. For the very same reason, it cannot afford to deal with the matter of expansion on a long-term basis, because its very future is highly dependent on its ability to resolve this issue in a positive and responsible way, even if it would involve the eventual refining of the Conference's rules of procedure.

We noted with satisfaction your remark at the opening plenary concerning the serious attention you were intending to give to the requests of 23 additional States for membership and the need for the establishment of an effective mechanism for the review of the decision contained in CD/1356. We expect that this level of commitment would be maintained by your successor, Ambassador Ramaker of the Netherlands, by dealing with the issue of expansion as a matter of urgency and major importance through his personal and interested engagement or, if he considers it more effective, by appointing a special coordinator on the issue of expansion.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Guillaume.

Baron GUILLAUME (Belgium) (translated from French): Mr. President, since my delegation is speaking for the first time with you in the Chair, I would like to say how much we have appreciated the skill that you have shown since becoming President. This has enabled us to commence the most urgent part of our work, namely, the negotiations on the CTBT. In your efforts, you have received the full cooperation of my delegation. Indeed, if I am taking the floor today, it is to a great extent in response to the consultations you are holding, in the framework entrusted to you by this Conference, on nuclear disarmament. I have expressed the position of my country in our bilateral conversations. Perhaps, though, it might be a good idea if I were to come back to them here in plenary.

Nuclear disarmament is a priority for Belgium and we have always emphasized this, whether by supporting the relevant resolutions on the subject at the United Nations, by welcoming progress in this area, by unilateral measures or by bilateral measures. However, we have always spoken out against purely rhetorical declarations or manoeuvring disguised as generous proposals. Now, it is the latter aspect that seems to be gaining the upper hand in this body, hence the need today to take stock.

Nuclear disarmament is a more than serious matter and it concerns everyone. Of course, it concerns the "nuclear" countries - that's the strictly disarmament aspect. But it also concerns all the others, and that's the non-proliferation aspect. Disarmament and non-proliferation are part and parcel of the nuclear disarmament concept. Of these two approaches, prevention and cure, the first is the more urgently needed to prevent the disease from spreading, but the second is obviously essential to our final objective of a world free of nuclear weapons.

In the area of nuclear non-proliferation we have striven successfully for years to find solutions to prevent the disease from spreading. The centrepiece of this action is the Treaty on nuclear non-proliferation, to which we gave a new lease of life last year by eliminating the impermanence which could only be prejudicial to it. Today the NPT is truly the cornerstone of the entire process of nuclear disarmament, and it is regrettable that certain countries, which are among the most fervent in calling for "nuclear disarmament", have not understood this and insist on remaining outside this treaty. In our view they are wrong, because not only are they preventing the NPT from becoming fully universal, but they have not understood that nuclear disarmament - for which they call so loudly - will be negotiated step by step within this treaty and that, on that day, they will not be at the table. They only have a little time left to change their position, because the process will start soon, since last year in New York the principle of the periodic review of this treaty was accepted and the first conference, a Prepcom, will take place in 1997. To give just one example - and I am speaking as the former Chairman of the CD's Ad Hoc Committee on this subject - I am convinced that any future negotiation on security assurances will be carried out solely within the NPT.

The Conference on Disarmament nevertheless has a role to play in nuclear disarmament, as it is proving with the current CTBT negotiations: these are a tangible contribution to nuclear disarmament and here we are far from great

(Baron Guillaume, Belgium)

flights of demagogic oratory. If, as we wish, a CTBT is signed in June, it will have impacts for everyone, including the five nuclear countries. A treaty banning fissile material for military purposes (the cut-off) also has a place in nuclear disarmament and it was really disheartening, in 1995, to see countries which were allegedly advocates of disarmament neutralize the committee on cut-off in the name of nuclear disarmament. This struck us as paradoxical, not to say suspicious. The CTBT and cut-off have a place in the CD, which is the sole multilateral body with the task of negotiating universal treaties.

For Belgium the CD is the natural negotiating forum for nuclear non-proliferation measures. The effectiveness of these measures is closely dependent on their universality - at all events the largest possible number of accessions. We think that only the Conference on Disarmament, which enables everyone to express his or her views while respecting those of others, is capable of bringing this large number together. We also continue to believe that a sincere commitment to non-proliferation cannot be reconciled with rejection of the NPT, and certainly not by countries whose nuclear potential is in everyone's mind.

However, concerning the dismantling of the stockpiles of the nuclear States, efficiency and political realism dictate that we should leave the negotiations to the Powers that possess these stockpiles. We are convinced that to place this problem in a multilateral context, that of the CD or any other, is counter-productive at this stage. This can only jeopardize both the non-proliferation efforts and the reduction of nuclear weapons. The very nature of these two exercises requires them to be pursued separately. The still more dangerous idea of making our non-proliferation efforts depend on a timetable for nuclear disarmament seems to us to be a manoeuvre which can only lead to the CTBT and the cut-off both being postponed indefinitely.

While bearing all this in mind, we must acknowledge that there are differences of scale among the nuclear Powers which make disarmament by the United States and Russia a priority. This is, indeed, very well understood by the two countries, because here progress has been made and we have pleasure in underlining the INF treaties, the implementation of START I and just recently START II by the American Senate. These are very tangible achievements in the area of nuclear disarmament. To this we should add the creation of regional denuclearized zones and the progress achieved in the field of security assurances. In parallel, a welcome should also be given to the unilateral decisions of some countries in the nuclear field, such as the moratoriums on nuclear testing, the halting of the production of fissile material for military purposes and, still more specifically, the withdrawal of 200 tons of this material by the United States. Of course, we remain true to the ultimate objective of total nuclear disarmament by all the countries of the globe, but we think that what I have just outlined represents very good steps in the right direction.

We should therefore first of all encourage the two major nuclear Powers to pursue their negotiations so that as soon as possible they reach a threshold where they can be joined by the three other nuclear Powers, in order that the five of them can adopt additional measures at that moment. Only when

(Baron Guillaume, Belgium)

we have reached that stage will there be a basis for truly multilateral negotiations in this area. On that day, but not before, the CD will have a role to play.

By way of conclusion, I can only encourage you to support the efforts of all those who are striving to achieve real progress in nuclear disarmament in all forums where the participants are striving to that end for the moment and to recognize those efforts. For the rest it is necessary, even if you have to have yourself tied to the mast like Ulysses, not to allow yourself to be enticed by the demagogical sirens who can only lure us off course in our efforts towards nuclear disarmament. In the present international context, Belgium's view is that well-thought-out, progressive, balanced and monitored disarmament is a major contribution to the security of all.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? It does not seem to be the case and, hence, I shall move ahead and make my closing statement.

As the term of Myanmar's presidency draws to a close, I would like to make some closing remarks on the work of the CD during my tenure.

It is customary at the beginning of each year for the incoming President to attempt to initiate the work of the CD in a smooth manner, and to reach agreement on a programme of work for the year. For understandable reasons, such endeavours have often proved to be difficult exercises and this year was no exception. My delegation spared no efforts to ensure a smooth and effective commencement of this year's session. Intensive consultations were held with the Group Coordinators as well as bilaterally with all individual delegations of the CD, who had made themselves available for this purpose. As a result, and due to the spirit of cooperation and flexibility demonstrated by all delegations, the CD was able to adopt its agenda, a programme of work for 1996, and to re-establish the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban at the first plenary. For this collective achievement, we owe a debt of gratitude to my predecessor Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco and his predecessors for laying a firm foundation for the smooth commencement of the 1996 session and for helping me overcome some difficult procedural issues on organizational arrangements.

To go on to CTBT negotiations, we are in agreement that the highest priority at this year's session must necessarily be accorded to the CTBT negotiations. I am heartened to note that the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban has commenced its work in a satisfactory manner. In this context, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Ramaker of the Netherlands, the Chairman of Working Group 1, Ambassador Berdennikov of the Russian Federation, the Chairman of Working Group 2, Ambassador Zahran of Egypt, and Friends of the Chair for their dedication and determined efforts to move forward the CTBT negotiations.

(The President)

I also take this opportunity to convey my profound gratitude to the former Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee, Ambassador Dembinski of Poland, the former Chairman of Working Group 1, Ambassador Norberg of Sweden, the former Chairman of Working Group 2, Ambassador Ramaker of the Netherlands, and the then Friends of the Chair for their important contribution toward the advancement of the CTBT negotiations during 1995.

The current year is the year of CTBT negotiations in the CD, and we are committed to complete this task at an early date. Given the complexity of the subject and numerous outstanding issues still to be satisfactorily addressed, it remains for us a challenging task. Our efforts now focus on resolving the outstanding issues and removing the remaining brackets in the rolling text. Any initiative or proposal that will be helpful to this exercise should be most welcome.

Outstanding issues are numerous, but they nevertheless narrow down to a few key issues. And the necessity exists for us to exert our energies on resolving the key issues of scope, preamble, entry into force, on-site inspection and national technical means. Early resolution of these fundamental issues will facilitate the solution of other outstanding items, and expedite the entire process of the CTBT negotiations. To this common objective, I urge all delegations to extend their full cooperation and display their maximum flexibility in our collective endeavour to bring the CTBT negotiations to a prompt and successful conclusion.

Now, to review of the future agenda and other items. Although we are very much occupied with the CTBT negotiations, we are devoting adequate attention to the other items on the CD agenda. By its decision adopted on 23 January, the CD entrusted Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria with the task of carrying out consultations on organizational arrangements to address four of the agenda items and the review of the future agenda of the CD. The four items consist of: the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices; effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; prevention of an arms race in outer space; and transparency in armaments. The Special Coordinator has begun to shoulder his important responsibilities, and no doubt all delegations of the CD join me in wishing him all the best in this important endeavour. I am confident that, given his expertise and diplomatic skills, Ambassador Meghlaoui will bring his work to a successful conclusion.

And now, nuclear disarmament. By another decision adopted on 23 January, the CD had entrusted the President with the responsibility to conduct intensive consultations on nuclear disarmament with a view to developing a basis for consensus on this issue. Accordingly, I have conducted a series of intensive consultations with the Group Coordinators as well as bilaterals with all delegations who have made themselves available for this purpose. I have also circulated a questionnaire to all delegations, and requested them to respond either orally or in writing. Almost all delegations have conveyed their respective positions on this issue in one way or another. There have been enthusiastic responses from several delegations. They expressed their

(The President)

views on identification of issues of nuclear disarmament that could be suitable for multilateral negotiations in the CD, and informed me that they were ready to elaborate on such issues if called upon.

But, despite my efforts, it was not possible to reach consensus on this issue during my tenure. The CD had taken a significant step to de-link the issue of nuclear disarmament with other items. Accordingly, I had anticipated that this exercise would possibly be reciprocated by some delegations by displaying greater flexibility on the issue of nuclear disarmament. At this point in time, my expectations have not yet been realized.

Nevertheless, these consultations have proved to be productive, and I detect some positive trends. They reveal that a considerable number of delegations favour the early establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament and have it commence negotiations on the subject during this year. These delegations, however, are prepared to view favourably the establishment of an open-ended working group, as an interim measure, provided that this exercise will lead to the establishment of an ad hoc committee within a reasonable period of time. Some delegations from one group do not favour establishment of any mechanism on this issue in the CD at this stage. Other delegations from the same group have expressed their flexibility, and are prepared to view favourably the establishment of an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament or a similar mechanism. Some delegations from another group have expressed their willingness to agree to the appointment of a special coordinator on this issue. They have also expressed their willingness to give their consent to the establishment of an open-ended working group or a similar mechanism.

From the above-mentioned positions of groups of countries and the outcome of my consultations, I have come to the following conclusions and recommendations. All of us share the common goal of nuclear disarmament including reductions of nuclear arsenals leading ultimately to the elimination of nuclear weapons. Differences still lie in our perceptions with regard to the means to achieve this goal, modalities, perceptions of what should constitute nuclear disarmament, assignment of priorities and timing of various steps to be implemented to that end. It appears that we must necessarily adopt a step-by-step approach in our endeavours to move forward on this issue. No delegation has ruled out a possible future role of the CD in the field of nuclear disarmament. A considerable number of delegations are in favour of the early establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament. All delegations, with the exception of a few, have expressed their willingness to agree to the establishment of an open-ended working group, as an interim step. The convergence of views among a considerable number of delegations seems to exist on the concept of a possible compromise formulation to the effect that the CD may wish to further consider the establishment, as an interim measure, of an open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament under a chairman; and that the working group identify the issues of nuclear disarmament that could be suitable for negotiations in the framework of the CD, and to develop a basis for consensus on an appropriate organizational arrangement to deal with nuclear disarmament.

(The President)

There still exist differences of views on the timing of the first step mentioned above, and the timing of the subsequent step to be taken. Although consensus does not exist on this in the CD as yet, there seems to exist a certain measure of convergence of views on the above-mentioned concept among most delegations. I would venture to suggest that we build on this concept, and try to advance further. Consequently, I should like to recommend that successive Presidents continue this process of consultations as circumstances permit, with a view to developing a basis for consensus. I am of the view that substantive progress on this issue will lead to the creation of propitious conditions for advancing the work of the CD, not only on this particular subject, but also on other issues as well. Accordingly, I encourage those delegations with strong positions on this issue to continue to lend their support to these exercises and display more flexibility in order to achieve our common objective.

Another important issue that had been the focus of my consultations is that of expansion of the membership of the CD. This was done in pursuance of decision CD/1356 dated 21 September 1995, and the conviction shared by all of us that this issue must be addressed as a high-priority task.

To recount the matter of expansion, we will recall that the ENDC and its successor bodies have evolved over the past 30 years since its inception in 1962. When the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament was created in 1962, my own country, the Union of Myanmar (at that time, the Union of Burma) was one of the original members together with seven other non-aligned and neutral countries. Hence Myanmar is in a unique position to appreciate the necessity for periodic expansion of membership of our Conference.

The ENDC evolved into the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) in 1969 with the enlarged membership of 26 States. It was further enlarged in 1975 to 31 States. In 1978, SSOD-I designated it as the single multilateral negotiating forum dealing with disarmament under the new name of the Committee on Disarmament (CD) with a new composition of membership. Accordingly, the CD was reconstituted in 1979 with the enlarged membership of 40 States, and it assumed its new name "Conference on Disarmament" in 1984.

My purpose in recounting this long history of our processes of expansion is to amply demonstrate that the CD has been evolving, and has been enlarged, stage by stage, as a necessity. In the present era many of us share the view that it is even overdue for the CD to enlarge its membership, reflecting the realities of the post-cold-war era. Avenues should continue to be explored to have the decision contained in CD/1356 of 21 September 1995 implemented and members of the G.23 admitted at the earliest possible date. The CD membership must also be kept under active review in accordance with rule 2 of the rules of procedure.

I conducted intensive consultations on this issue with Group Coordinators, with members of the Group of 23 and with other non-member States both collectively and bilaterally. Despite all my efforts, circumstances were such that it was not possible to implement decision CD/1356 during my presidency. However, these consultations have been most valuable, and will certainly contribute to our endeavours to find a solution to this outstanding

(The President)

issue. At the request of the members of the Group of 23, I have met and briefed them informally on the substance of the Presidential consultations. I intend to hold another informal briefing session with them during this week.

The future role of the CD is being discussed among delegations in earnest as has never been done before, in consonance with the dramatic changes in the international situation. It is naturally appropriate that we are now turning our thoughts and attention to what the future role of the CD should be in the post-cold-war era. SSOD-I had designated three multilateral bodies to deal with disarmament: the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament and the Disarmament Commission. The post-cold-war period has created propitious conditions for reaching agreements on various issues of arms limitation and disarmament; it has also brought new issues for multilateral arms limitation and disarmament negotiations. There is room for enhanced roles for the First Committee and the CD. I believe that we should strengthen the roles of these two important multilateral bodies. The work of the Disarmament Commission is in many areas overlapping with the functions of the First Committee. At a time when streamlining of the United Nations system is high on our current agenda, we may take a more careful look at the future role of the Commission and thereby enhance its effectiveness.

My presidency has been a fruitful and satisfying experience for me. I would like to convey my thanks to all delegations for their cooperation and valuable support. May I also convey my deep appreciation to the Group Coordinators for their cooperation and support? My thanks also go to members of the Group of 23 and other non-member States, who have worked closely with me in my consultations on expansion of the membership of the CD. I express my profound gratitude to Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the CD and Personal Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Bensmail, Deputy Secretary-General of the CD, and staff members of the secretariat, who have assisted me in numerous ways in the discharge of my duties. And I must also thank the interpreters, whose services have been indispensable. I thank you all.

To proceed further, the secretariat has circulated, at my request, a tentative timetable of meetings for next week. This timetable was prepared in consultation with the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban and is, as usual, only indicative and subject to change if necessary. On this understanding, may I assume that the timetable is acceptable?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 22 February 1996 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.